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C O N F I D E N T I A L SANAA 000185

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 01/27/2008

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [IZ](#) [YM](#)

SUBJECT: PEACEFUL DEMONSTRATION AGAINST WAR IN IRAQ IN SANAA

Classified By: Ambassador Edmund J. Hull for Reasons 1/5 (b,d)

1. (U) A large, peaceful and well-controlled demonstration was held on January 27 in Sanaa expressing solidarity with the Iraqi and Palestinian people and protesting a possible war in Iraq. Demonstrators gathered from different points around the city to converge in mid-morning near the United Nations common premises (approximately 25 minutes away from the U.S. Embassy). The demonstration was billed as a general, all-party demonstration, and prominent Yemeni politicians took part. Presidential Advisor Abdul Karim al-Iryani and Speaker of Parliament Sheikh Abdullah Ahmar both gave speeches and marched with the demonstrators. Crowd estimates vary widely from 250,000 to 5,000, with the latter being a likelier number. Post used its radio net and warden message systems to warn Amcits to avoid non-essential travel during the demonstration, which did not approach the Embassy premises.

2. (U) Post received early warning of possible demonstrations through press reports and contacts. It was apparent early in the day that the ROYG was well-prepared for the demonstration, with hundreds of security officials deployed around Sanaa and concentrated near the United Nations complex. According to security officials, several busloads of protesters from varying tribal areas were brought in for the demonstration. A senior Yemeni security official estimated the crowd in front of the UN at 250,000. Embassy assets estimate, however, a crowd closer to 5,000.

3. (U) Although the demonstration appeared to be well-controlled and peaceful from the beginning, post decided to warn Amcits to avoid non-essential travel during the demonstration through its radio and warden message systems early in the morning. By 12:15, post was able to disseminate an all-clear message that the demonstration was over and the participants were dispersing peacefully.

4. (C) Comment: Indications such as the high-profile participants involved and the detailed security presence show that the demonstration was probably orchestrated in part by the Yemeni government as a way to let the Yemeni public blow off steam. It was peaceful and well-controlled, boding well for the ROYG's ability to control future demonstrations and ensure security. End comment.

HULL